

# Tips for Employers Providing References to Students

If a student who has done an internship with your organization asks to use your name as a reference for a job application, here are some tips:

1. Discuss the type of reference that you will provide with the person who asks you to be a reference. If you cannot provide a good reference, be honest with the individual. Don't promise a "glowing reference" and then provide merely a "glimmer."
2. Follow your organization's policy regarding providing a reference. If references are handled in a centralized fashion, advise the prospective employer that even though you may be named as a reference, your organization's policy prohibits you from providing the reference. Direct the employer to the appropriate person in the organization.
3. Respond only to specific inquiries; do not volunteer information.
4. There is no such thing as "off the record." Informal discussions with prospective employers regarding a person's performance should be avoided.
5. Prior to providing a reference, obtain consent from the person about whom the reference will be given. If you are unaware that the job applicant has named you as a reference, ask the prospective employer for verification that the individual has given consent for the reference. Such verification could include a copy of the student's signed application listing you as a reference, your name listed as a reference on the student's resume, or verbal confirmation by the student to you.
6. Do not include information that might indicate an individual's race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, citizenship status, sex, or marital status.
7. Do not base an opinion of performance on stereotypes about an individual. For example, "for a woman, she excels in math."
8. Information should be factual, based upon personal knowledge/observation of the student through direct contact, or obtained from the personnel record or student record.
9. Avoid giving personal opinions or feelings. If you make subjective statements or give opinions because they are requested, clearly identify them as opinions and not as fact.
10. Do not guess or speculate. If someone asks you questions regarding personal characteristics about which you have no knowledge, state that you have no knowledge.
11. Relate references to the specific position for which the student has applied and to the work that the applicant will perform.
12. State in the reference letter: "This information is confidential and should be treated as such. It is provided at the request of (name of student), who has asked me to serve as a reference."
13. Document all information you release.

Courtesy of the National Association of Colleges and Employers.